UNITED NATIONS

UNFCCC Framework Convention on Climate Change

Distr.
GENERAL

FCCC/SBI/2001/INF.11
23 October 2001

ENGLISH ONLY

SUBSIDIARY BODY FOR IMPLEMENTATION
Fifteenth session
Marrakesh, 29 October – 6 November 2001
Item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda

NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM PARTIES NOT INCLUDED IN ANNEX I TO THE CONVENTION

REPORT OF THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP OF EXPERTS TO THE SUBSIDIARY BODIES

Consolidated report of Parties' views on the preliminary report of the Consultative Group of Experts, and on the current progress of the process aiming at the improvement of guidelines for subsequent national communications from non-Annex I Parties

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Mandate

1. The Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), at its fourteenth session, invited Parties to submit views on the preliminary report of the Consultative Group of Experts (CGE) and on the current progress of the process aiming at improvement of the guidelines for subsequent national communications of Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (non-Annex I Parties) by 15 September 2001 (FCCC/SBI/2001/9, para. 22(b)). Twelve Parties (Australia, Belgium on behalf of the European Community and its Member States, Brazil, China, Georgia, Kenya, Lebanon, the Republic of Moldova, Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, Switzerland, Thailand and the United States of America) submitted their views on these issues.

2. The SBI requested the secretariat to prepare a consolidated report on Parties' views on these issues for consideration at its fifteenth session.

B. Scope

3. Information in this report is presented in four sections. Section II provides a summary of general comments on the preliminary report of the CGE, and on the current progress of the

process aiming at improvement of the guidelines for subsequent national communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention. Section III summarizes the views expressed by Parties on various thematic areas of the national communications as contained in the preliminary report of the CGE. Section IV encapsulates the views expressed by Parties on the current progress of the process aimed at improving the UNFCCC guidelines; the frequency of submission of national communications of non-Annex I Parties and the future work of the CGE.

II. GENERAL COMMENTS

4. Parties noted that the preparation and submission of national communications is a key obligation of all Parties to the Convention and welcomed the opportunity to submit views on the preliminary report of the CGE, and on the current progress of the process aiming at improvement of the guidelines for subsequent national communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention. They acknowledged that substantial progress had been made by the CGE within a relatively short period of time (June 2000 to March 2001) in addressing its terms of reference and producing a comprehensive report covering all relevant aspects of national communications from non-Annex I Parties. Georgia observed that non-Annex I countries with economies in transition were not invited to contribute to the current process and suggested that these Parties be given the opportunity to participate in the future work of the CGE.

5. Australia and Switzerland made note of the financial and technical assistance they have provided towards the implementation of the work programme of the CGE.

6. Parties expressed appreciation to the UNFCCC secretariat for its support to the CGE in the discharge of its mandate.

III. PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP OF EXPERTS

7. Parties provided diverse views on the thematic areas of the CGE report namely: national circumstances; national greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories; vulnerability and adaptation assessments; GHG abatement analysis; education, training and public awareness; support programmes; financial and technical assistance; and recommendations to improve the IPCC methodologies and models.

A. National circumstances

8. Most Parties agreed with the recommendation of the CGE regarding the scope of information to be reported under national circumstances as contained in paragraphs 192 and 193 of its report. Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States suggested that non-Annex I Parties should be encouraged to provide detailed information on their national circumstances and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, to the extent that their capacities allow.

9. Brazil proposed that information recommended by the CGE for inclusion under national circumstances relating to energy, transport, industry, mining, waste, agriculture, forest and land use should rather be reported under national greenhouse gas inventories, and those on tourism, health and environment be provided under vulnerability and adaptation assessment. Information on education and research might be included either in the section on research and systematic observation or education, training and public awareness.

B. National greenhouse gas inventories

Activity data and emission factors

10. Kenya, commenting on the problems outlined in the CGE report relating to the preparation of national GHG inventories outlined in paragraphs 38 to 46, indicated that many of these problems had already been identified in a workshop[1] held previously. It suggested that these problems still persisted because project concepts on activity data and emission factors have not been developed by non-Annex I Parties with the financial support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as had been requested by the SBI (FCCC/SBI/1999/14). Lebanon and Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States endorsed the findings of the CGE (paragraphs 50 to 52) and emphasized the need to improve data collection in a number of sectors including transport, agriculture and energy to facilitate processing, archiving and updating inventory data on a continuous basis.

UNFCCC guidelines

11. On the recommendations of the CGE for the improvement of the UNFCCC guidelines on national greenhouse gas inventories as contained in paragraphs 192 to 203 of the CGE report, Brazil was of the view that recommendations for the review of guidelines should be based only on information contained in national communications and not on views expressed at the CGE workshops, and commented that the implementation of many of the recommendations could increase the cost of preparing inventories.

12. Brazil and China objected to the recommendation to replace table II of the UNFCCC guidelines with the IPCC summary table 7A for summary reporting (para. 197 of the CGE report). Brazil argued that, due to the lack of country-specific activity data and appropriate emission factors, such replacement would not necessarily improve the completeness of reporting and the quality of inventories (paragraph 194 of the CGE report), while China indicated that the use of the IPCC summary table 7A would be difficult for many non-Annex I Parties, arguing that information on perfluorocarbons, sulphur hexafluoride and the GHG precursor non-methane volatile organic compounds would not be readily available in these countries.

13. Brazil opposed the recommendation to encourage non-Annex I Parties to report on hydrofluorocarbon emissions (paragraph 201 of the CGE report), stressing that it considered these emissions to be insignificant in most non-Annex I Parties. It also disagreed with the recommendation to encourage Parties to present their GHG emissions and removals in carbon dioxide equivalents using global warming potentials and argued that this is not required by Article 12 of the Convention.

14. The United States of America recommended that inventory guidelines for non-Annex I Parties should be compatible with the common reporting format of Annex I Parties in order to better facilitate compilation and synthesis of aggregate GHG information.

---

[1] UNFCCC Expert Workshop on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories, Accra, Ghana, August 1999.

Financial and technical assistance

15. Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States emphasized the need to ensure continuity and consistency of efforts in GHG inventory preparation through the strengthening of national mechanisms for such activities.

C. Vulnerability and adaptation assessment

16. Most Parties, endorsing the recommendations contained in paras. 69 to 70 of the CGE report, observed that adaptation to climate change is a priority for many non-Annex I Parties.

17. In the light of the high priority placed on climate change vulnerability and adaptation assessment by many non-Annex I Parties, Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States reiterated its request to hold a workshop on adaptation in the last quarter of 2001 and report on its results to future sessions of the SBI (FCCC/SBI/2001/L.1)

UNFCCC guidelines

18. Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States stressed the need for a scientifically based, country-driven approach to vulnerability and adaptation with a set of reporting elements that would provide a basis for comparison.

19. Many Parties expressed the need for clearer guidance to be given to non-Annex I Parties on information on vulnerability and adaptation assessment for inclusion in their national communications. In this context, Switzerland supported the recommendation of the CGE to revise the guidelines as annexed to decision 10/CP.2, in order to provide an appropriate framework for reporting on vulnerability and adaptation assessment. Furthermore, Belgium on behalf of the European Community and its Member States and China, endorsed the recommendation by the CGE to develop and include a separate section on vulnerability and adaptation to climate change in the national communication (paragraph 206 of the CGE report).

Financial and technical assistance

20. Brazil, while supporting the inclusion of a separate section on vulnerability and adaptation assessment in the national communication, suggested that provision of such information should not be mandatory and that additional financial support would be needed by Parties wishing to provide such information.

21. Brazil, Kenya and Lebanon noted that most of the problems identified in the CGE report are related to lack of data, financial resources and the capacity to undertake the assessments (paragraphs 74 to 77 of the CGE report). They suggested that additional financial and technical assistance is needed to improve impact models and socio-economic scenarios for integrated vulnerability and adaptation assessments.

D. Greenhouse gas abatement analysis

22. Samoa, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, made note of the attempt by the countries in the Alliance to reduce GHG emissions through measures that promote sustainable

development in the energy, agriculture, forestry and waste management sectors despite their apparent low level of GHG emissions from these sectors.

UNFCCC guidelines

23. Most Parties agreed with the recommendation of the CGE that GHG abatement analysis should be evaluated in the context of sustainable development (paragraph 189 of the CGE report). China, while supporting this recommendation, stressed that information on mitigation analysis and the development of mitigation projects should be reported on a voluntary basis.

24. Brazil indicated that mitigation analysis should take into account the clean development mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol.

Financial and technical assistance

25. Brazil stressed that additional financial and technological resources would be needed by some non-Annex I Parties to implement abatement measures.

E. Education, training and public awareness

26. Kenya stressed the importance of education, training and public awareness in addressing climate change concerns at the national level and recommended that these issues be adequately addressed in enabling activity projects (paragraphs 104 to 118 of the CGE report).

F. Support programmes

27. Switzerland and Lebanon recognized the importance of programmes that facilitated and provided financial and technical support (paragraphs 133 to 145 of the CGE report) to non-Annex I Parties in maintaining and enhancing national expertise and ensuring that there was continuous improvement of national communications from non-Annex I Parties. In this light, Lebanon recommended that the work of the National Communications Support Programme should be continued to provide technical assistance to non-Annex I Parties.

G. Financial and technical assistance

28. Parties acknowledged that the level of funding for the preparation of national communication by non-Annex I Parties was not commensurate with the needs of non-Annex I Parties (paragraph 145 of the CGE report). Kenya and Thailand recommended that the GEF should consider increasing its level of funding for the preparation of national communications. In addition, China noted that there are many difficulties faced by non-Annex I Parties in using the current UNFCCC guidelines, and suggested that the provision of adequate financial resources might help non-Annex I Parties improve their capabilities in applying the guidelines for the preparation of national communications.

29. Samoa, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, stressed that the continued funding for the preparation of national communications was essential for maintaining national teams that have been established to prepare national communications and facilitate the integration of climate change concerns into national policy.

B. Improvement of IPCC methodologies and other models

30. Belgium on behalf of the European Community and its Member States endorsed the recommendations for the improvement of the IPCC methodologies and models, and further suggested that the IPCC should take into account the recommendations of the CGE in developing and prioritizing its future work plan.

National GHG inventories

31. Parties acknowledged that the 1996 Revised IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories provide a good basis for estimating national GHG emissions. Furthermore, Australia, Lebanon and Switzerland suggested that some aspects of the Guidelines should be revised, particularly in the land-use change and forestry sector, as well as in the energy, agriculture and waste sectors to better reflect the conditions of non-Annex I Parties.

32. Australia also noted that the development of the IPCC Emission Factor Database and training in and elaboration of the IPCC Good Practice Guidance and Uncertainty Management might help improve the inventories relating to land-use change and forestry, while Switzerland stressed that this might also improve the quality of GHG inventories in the second national communication of Parties.

Vulnerability and adaptation assessment

33. Australia, commenting on the recommendations for improvement of the IPCC methodologies and other models, indicated that the provision of easily understood methods, tools and technical guidelines (paragraph187 of the CGE report) is essential for vulnerability and adaptation assessments in non-Annex I Parties.

IV. CURRENT PROGRESS OF THE PROCESS AIMING AT THE IMPROVEMENT OF GUIDELINES FOR SUBSEQUENT NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

A. Revision of the UNFCCC guidelines

34. All Parties were in agreement that the UNFCCC guidelines should be revised, but differed strongly on when the revision should commence.

35. Brazil, China, and Thailand argued that decision 8/CP.5 called for the review of the guidelines based on information contained in a representative and meaningful number of national communications from non-Annex I Parties. In their view, the 51 national communications from non-Annex I Parties considered by the CGE do not necessarily constitute a representative and meaningful number of national communications and therefore it would be premature to substantially revise the guidelines when the majority of non-Annex I Parties are still in the process of preparing their initial national communications. Samoa, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, also supported the view that it would be more prudent to obtain a more representative cross-section of initial national communications before embarking on a full-scale revision of guidelines which could be pre-emptive and pre-judgemental.

36. Australia, Belgium, on behalf of the European Community and its Member States, the Republic of Moldova, Switzerland and the United States of America argued that revision of the

guidelines should commence at COP 7 since, in their view, the CGE has produced sufficient information on issues, constraints and problems that non-Annex I Parties face in the preparation of national communications. In addition, the United States of America pointed out that the revised guidelines would enable the GEF to fund second national communications of non-Annex I Parties after COP 7.

37. Australia further suggested that the CGE should prepare draft amendments of the guidelines for consideration by the COP at its seventh session, while the United States of America suggested that the SBI should request the secretariat to prepare draft guidelines for the second national communications of non-Annex I Parties for consideration by the SBI at its sixteenth session.

38. Brazil expressed the view that that the CGE was established with the purpose of improving the process of preparing national communications from non-Annex I Parties and that the revision of the guidelines for the preparation of national communications is not the responsibility of the expert group.

B. Frequency of submission of national communications by non-Annex I Parties

39. In respect of paragraph 2 of decision 8/CP.5, the United States of America suggested that non-Annex I Parties should submit their national communications every three years and provide national greenhouse gas inventories on an annual basis to enable GEF support to continue for the maintenance and reporting of greenhouse gas inventory information.

C. Future work of the CGE

40. In relation to the future work of the CGE, China, Kenya, Lebanon and Thailand considered that it was necessary for the CGE to continue its work to improve the preparation of national communications of non-Annex I Parties that were still in the process of doing so.

41. Thailand noted that the task of the CGE related to coordination among support programmes that facilitate and support the preparation of national communications was not sufficiently addressed, and therefore recommended that the CGE should further elaborate on this issue so as to avoid duplication of efforts in the assistance that these programmes provide to non-Annex I Parties.

42. Australia and Switzerland were of the view that the report provided a sound analysis of barriers and difficulties encountered by non-Annex I Parties in preparing their national communications and recommended that the CGE should also take into account the results of COP 6, part two. Australia further recommended that the CGE should also provide recommendations on how assistance to countries that are in the process of preparing their national communications could be made more effective, and examine its effectiveness, cost, and ease of implementation in order to help set priorities for consideration by the subsidiary bodies.

Terms of reference of the CGE

43. Samoa, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, supports the view that the CGE should continue its work and suggested that the group could be used as a resource for providing additional assistance to Parties in preparing their first and second national communications. It

further suggested that the CGE could encourage the development of common methodologies for the energy, agriculture, forestry and waste management sectors, as well as methodologies appropriate for particular groups of non-Annex I Parties.

44. Belgium on behalf of the European Community and its Member States suggested that the CGE mandate could be extended to include the provision of technical advice on the preparation of national adaptation programmes of action and that the composition of the CGE be amended to enhance representation of the least developed countries.

45. The United States of America recommended that the terms of reference of the CGE should be reconsidered at the same time as the adoption of the revised guidelines and the schedule for submission of second national communications at COP 8.

Funding

46. Switzerland highly appreciated the work of the CGE and recommended that funding of the activities of the CGE should be done through the core budget of the Convention secretariat.

- - - - -